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THE
PANTHEON:
A
VISION.



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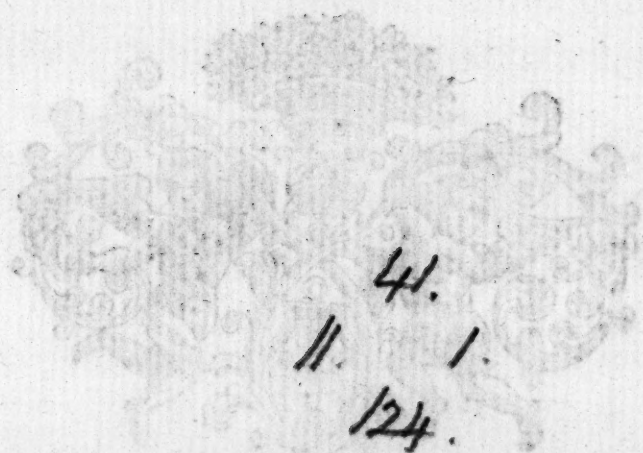


LONDON:

Printed for R. DODSLEY at Tully's Head in Pall-Mall ;
and Sold by M. COOPER in Pater-nosterRow. 1747.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE following Piece was written at the University, towards the Close of the Year 1743. The Design of it is to take a *Poetical* View of the several Religions, that have prevailed in the World ; which are represented by different *Genii* residing in their different Temples, with the proper Symbols of their respective Faiths. These are reduced to Four principal Heads ; *Paganism, Mohammedanism, Judaism, and Christianity* : The latter is subdivided into Three, viz. *Popery, Sectarism, and true Religion* ; by which last the Author would be understood to mean THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND : a Church, he believes, both in its Doctrine and Constitution, the most pure and Apostolical upon Earth.

The Author must acknowledge himself obliged, for some material Hints, to an Essay of Mr. *Addison's* on a similar Subject ; though treated by him in a very different Manner. How great his Obligation is, will be best seen by looking into the Fourth Volume of the *Tatler*, N^o. 257.

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THE
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OF mystic visions, and th' illusive scenes
By wakeful fancy form'd, when Reason sleeps,
And the gay mimic mounts her airy throne,
I sing. Do thou, celestial Muse, inspire
5 The daring verse, and guide my roving flight,
While borne on tender wings I boldly search
The dark recesses of th' ideal world,
And intimate eternal truths to man.

Now

Now had the clarion cock, with lively din,
 10 Scatter'd the thin remains of night, and chas'd
 The silent spectres to their hallow'd haunts ;
 When, plac'd by magic slumber's potent spell,
 In the deep centre of a lonely grove
 Trembling I stood : High arching o'er my head
 15 Th' inwoven boughs diffus'd a fearful gloom ;
 More fearful, from the glare of shooting fires
 Athwart the ruddy sky : Around, above,
 Ten thousand hideous brain-bred forms affright,
 Beating with leathern wings the dusky air :
 20 While thro' the wood on ev'ry side arose
 A deaf'ning clamour ; horrible and loud,
 As when the stormy deep, at dead of night,
 Howls for some trembling atheist's guilty head,
 And heav'n in thunder ratifies the claim ;
 25 Then ceas'd at once, and awful silence reign'd
 In the still air ; but soon the hasty tread
 Of rustling feet amid the wither'd leaves
 Alarm'd my ear, and, gliding thro' the trees,

Sudden

Sudden a rev'rend shape, to view reveal'd,
 30 Beckons me forward : Full of days he seem'd,
 Yet mild his look and clear, where dignity
 With sweetness sat enthron'd, and awe with love.
 Surpriz'd I started ; he, with gentle lore,
 Exhorts me from this monster-breeding wood,
 35 Replete with dreary forms, to wing my way,
 And seek with speed RELIGION's sacred fane.

He spoke, I follow'd : swift with winding steps
 We thread the mazy path ; and, soon emerg'd
 From the brown shades to green enchanting fields,
 40 Breathe purer air, and seem to walk the sky.

Full in our sight on marble columns rear'd
 A lofty temple stands, of cubic form,
 But rising from the midst an ample dome
 Swells to the sight, beneath whose concave roof,
 45 Enthron'd in pompous majesty, there sat
 An antient, hoary, venerable form.
 Fire fill'd his eye, and thirst of boundless rule

Sat painted on his cheek, but envious time
 Had shrunk his furrow'd skin, and plow'd his front
 50 With wrinkles, sure prognostics of decay.
 Expressive emblems load his trembling hands ;
 His right extends a sceptre, and his left
 A swelling globe sustains, whose surface marks
 Earth's wide extent ; yet scarce his feeble joints,
 55 Palsied with eating age, retain their hold,
 But, shrinking up, contract their narrow grasp.
 Low at his footstool bend his servile priests
 With holy fillets crown'd ; and, scatt'ring grains
 Of fuming incense o'er the hallow'd flame,
 60 With balmy odours cheer their fainting God.

The storied walls that grace the sumptuous fane
 Front the four winds, and ope their brazen gates
 To all the distant quarters of the sky.

Northward, on slender columns nicely rais'd
 65 A pointed arch shoots upward, delicate

With

With gothic pride, and lavish ornament.
 Beneath whose narrow bow in giant-state
 Sat mighty * Thor, that aw'd the frozen world,
 And stretch'd o'er Saxon hosts his iron sway.
 70 Near him, like some Colossus, huge and vast,
 Stood crafty Woden, that in artful trance
 Div'd into fate, and thence commenc'd a God.
 Here too the massy forms of Scythian Gods,
 Besmear'd with stranger's gore, tremendous frown'd
 75 In dreadful shape ; as erst when rear'd amid
 The snows that cloath the bleak Riphæan hills.
 There the red altars smok'd with human blood
 To sooth the savage pow'rs; the Druids there,
 And mystic Bards, from caves or moss-grown oaks,
 80 Like solemn ravens boded dire events.
 High o'er the arch a window's spacious round
 In broad effulgence gleams, like Luna's disk.

B 2

With

* THOR and WODEN were the great Captains and Legislators of the *Goths*,
 and therefore honoured with divine Worship : The latter, according to an
 Author quoted by Sir *W. Temple*, counterfeited Epileptic Fits, and in them
 pretended to receive his Laws by Inspiration.

With optic tube survey'd : The pictur'd glafs,
 Distain'd with lucid colours, richly glow'd.
 85 Round the tall vault, and where the gloomy light
 Breaks from above, the Runic lays inscrib'd,
 In form uncouth and rude, record the praise
 Of many a chief by brutal courage rais'd
 To Heav'n's high dome, and number'd with the Gods.
 90 Eastward the sparkling wall with jewels blaz'd
 From Indian quarries hewn ; the beaming gems,
 Dispos'd in rich variety, display
 The gaudy worship of th' extended East.
 The glorious sun, in flaming diamonds clad,
 95 Scarce feels diminish'd lustre ; prostrate falls
 The dazled Persian, and in open air
 Salutes the rising monarch of the skies.
 Beyond, a motley group of Indian Gods,
 Each with his Bramin trembling at his side,
 100 Magnificently shine, in orient pearl
 And fiery rubies deck'd : The gaping crowd
 Of

Of votaries with distant silence gaze,
 Aw'd by the radiant shape themselves had fram'd.
 There too, supreme among th' infernal crew
 105 That erst in Palestine presum'd to fix
 Their feats, grim Moloch stands, intoxicate
 With infants blood, that past thro' scorching flame
 To grace his horrid rites : The rest were those
 Whose shrines the sapient king on Sion's mount
 110 Up-rear'd, by female blandishments mis-led.

The South with pointed obelisks was grac'd,
 And learned Hieroglyphs, divinely dark,
 Fraught with each mystic shape that Egypt yields.
 There on the crowded walls she pours her Gods
 115 Unnumber'd, as the sands that cloath the shore,
 Or motes that wanton in the solar ray.
 Full in the midst great Nilus swells his tide
 Exuberant, but veils the plenteous urn
 Whence flow the fruitful streams : To guard his banks
 120 The Crocodile unsheaths his triple row

Of

- Of murd'rous teeth, and claims celestial rites
 For towns unpeopled, and for nations slain.
 There Isis and Ofiris met my view,
 With dog Anubis, and the bestial race
 125 Of quadruped divinities, that rise
 From Nile's fecundant bed : The prostrate throng
 Devoutly view the half-form'd Gods, that drag
 Their slimy lengths, and flounder in the mud.
 Nor far from thence the vegetable tribe
 130 Of Deities, that from well-temper'd mold
 Extract nutritious juice, in verdant rows
 Rear their tall heads, th' almighties of an hour,
 That bud to day, and, parch'd with summer's heat,
 Fade from their Godhead in to-morrow's sun.
 135 Westward an arch, on Dorian columns rais'd,
 Supports the fabled Gods of antient Greece,
 And Rome's proud tow'rs. There Jove, on Ida's top,
 Grasps the red thunder, and beneath his feet
 Tramples the rebel Titans ; here disguis'd

140 In snowy plumes, swan-like, he seeks the breast
 Of whiter Leda, raging with desire :
 Omnipotence with lewdness ill-combin'd !
 There Mars, dissolving in the warm embrace
 Of wanton Cytherea, lies intwin'd
 145 In Vulcan's net : The gazing Deities
 With laughter shake high Heav'n's imperial dome.
 Beneath, the sable realms of Orcus lie,
 Where iron Pluto views his ravish'd queen,
 Smiling with grim delight. Around the coast
 150 Where black Cocytus rolls, the damn'd endure
 Poetic tortures ; there Ixion writhes
 Chain'd to the burning wheel, who durst attempt,
 Ambitious fool ! the sister-wife of Jove.
 There Tantal thirsts amid the liquid pool,
 155 Ridiculously wretched ; Furies round
 Brandish their snaky whips ; the trembling crowd
 Shrink from the stroke, and all the depth of Hell
 Echoes with dismal yells, and shrieks of woe.

Such

Such were the scenes, that on the lively walls,
 160 In sculpture part, and part in breathing paint,
 Stood prominent; each rising figure, swell'd
 With bold relief, seems starting into life.
 Here, in attention wrapt, we gaze, and mark
 With plausive murmurs, how the sweet'ning shades
 165 Melt into light, and marble rocks assume
 A borrow'd softness, as with souls inform'd:
 But soon the gay delusion cloy's the sight,
 Nor long restrains us from our destin'd course.

When now the Pagan dome by slow degrees
 170 Sunk from our sight, and dipt its lofty head
 Beneath th' horizon's verge, a stately mosque,
 With eastern pomp and Turkish grandeur deck'd,
 Salutes our wand'ring eyes. High o'er the front
 A golden crescent rears her lucid horns,
 175 Emblem of growing pow'r: The vaulted roof,
 'On twice ten thousand tap'ring columns rais'd,
 Glitters with radiant gems, like stars that gild

The

The canopy of heav'n. Beneath it fate
 The haughty genius of the pile, his mien
 180 Was fierce and cruel; on his quiv'ring lip
 Hung fiery rage; youth sparkled in his eyes,
 But gloomy frowns o'ercast his clouded brow.
 Three various dyes, confus'dly blended, form
 His robe's discordant patch-work: In his hand
 185 He grasps a sabre, whose refulgent point
 Rests on a mystic legendary page
 Expanded wide beneath his gorgeous throne.
 Behind his seat the opening valves display
 A verdant grove, where on the mossy turf
 190 In gay disorder balmy flow'rets spring
 T' enrich the breathing gales; while feather'd choirs
 Amid the blossoms woo their vocal mates,
 Warbling wild harmony and sylvan songs.
 Beneath the branching trees, in loose attire,
 195 Brisk damsels wander in the chequer'd shade,
 Each with her am'rous swain; or else, reclin'd

Where blended sweets unite in fragrant bow'rs,
 And crystal streams in silver windings glide,
 Invite the tender zephyrs, to restrain
 200 The scorching fervour of the noonday sun.

But when cool evening, soft vicissitude
 Of glaring day, her dusky mantle first
 Begins to spread; sudden, the signal giv'n,
 Ten thousand starry lamps, in blazing rows
 205 Or lucid arcs dispos'd, their beamy rays
 Dart from afar: Around the peopled walks
 All in one instant kindle into light,
 And each long vista glows with trains of fire.

Amid the grove a stately fabric stands,
 210 Sacred to harmony: There dulcet sounds
 Of joyous symphony and vocal song
 In sweet confusion strike the ravish'd sense,
 And sooth the melting soul to young desire.

The jocund crowds along th' illumin'd glades
215 Enraptur'd rove, or where superbly rife
The tall pavilions rich with sculptur'd gold
And lively portraitures, their pamper'd taste
Regale with choicest viands, and from bowls
Of juice nectarean quaff delicious draughts.
220 But part, retiring where the thicker shades
Imbrown the turf, in blissful extasy
Enfold some coy, reluctant, yielding fair,
And breathe out all their souls in raging love.
To form their couch, indulgent nature spreads
225 The honied woodbine and the blushing rose,
And ev'ry vernal bud: In plaintive notes
The nightingale repeats her love-sick lay,
And the smooth murmur of the water's fall,
In lulling harmony conspiring, steeps
230 Their humid eyes in slumber's balmy dew.

Fir'd at the guilty scene of brutal bliss,
The hoary sage indignant frown'd, and left

Th' Impostor's throne ; when soon to fight arose,
 Bright beaming from afar, a glorious pile,
 235 Of workmanship divine, compar'd with which
 The boasted labours of the gentile world,
 Corinth, and lordly Rome, or those proud * tow'rs
 That fell beneath an harlot's drunken rage,
 Tho' justly fam'd, shrink their diminish'd heads,
 240 Faint copies of this great original !
 But, as we near approach'd, the nodding walls,
 And columns starting from their destin'd charge,
 Confess'd the stroke of time ; yet seem'd it still
 Majestic, tho' decay'd : As heav'n's bright orb,
 245 When ken'd with learned eye, appears distain'd
 With floating spots and pitchy clouds; yet shines
 Lord of the skies, unrivall'd, and alone.

Thron'd on an ebon chair amid the fane
 An antient Rabbin sat ; mysterious types,

250 In-

* *Persepolis*, destroy'd by *Alexander* at the Instigation of the Courtesan *Thais*.
Villalpandus has undertaken to prove, that the Ornaments and Proportions of
 the *Grecian* Architecture were borrowed from *Solomon's Temple* at *Jerusalem*.

250 Inscib'd on broad phylacteries, adorn'd
 His priestly vestments ; on his swarthy brow
 Black Discontent hung low'ring ; at his feet
 Five small, but sacred, books neglected lay :
 On these uprear'd huge tomes of holy lyes
 255 Support his leaning arm ; his hand behind
 Grasps the swoln casket, big with gold and gems,
 Spoils of th' uncircumcis'd : By these inspir'd,
 He grins with ghastly joy, and scorns mankind.

Beyond him, draughted on the glowing wall,
 260 Terrific scenes appear : On Sinai's top,
 With darkness veil'd, JEHOVAH's self descends
 In flaming fire ; air blacken'd as he rode,
 Earth trembles, lightnings flash, big thunders roll,
 And the shrill trumpet's voice with loud alarm
 265 Awakes th' astonied camp : To silence aw'd,
 They hear his high behests in mortal sounds
 Burst from the cloudy shrine : The mountain smoaks
 With fervent heat, beneath th' Almighty's tread
 Convuls'd, and conscious of th' immediate God.

270 With pious awe my venerable guide
 Confess'd the footsteps of Omnipotence ;
 Then through th' imperfect fane, by prophets led,
 (A holy, rev'rend, heav'n-directed band,)
 Shap'd his unerring course, to neighb'ring plains,
 275 Where a new prospect lures the roving fight.

Rear'd on a splendid arc's triumphal round,
 A waving standard to the wind unfolds
 The mystic sign that erst confirm'd the faith
 Of Rome's imperial lord, when high in air
 280 The flaming cross bespoke his dazled eye,
 " In this believe, and conquer". On we pass
 To blissful regions, where the purple sky
 Glows with serener light, diffusing round
 Ethereal rays, that hill and valley smiles.

285 Rais'd on a smooth ascent three temples stand,
 Contiguous, yet distinct : In front appears
 A beauteous dome, and rear'd on either hand

Two

Two sister fanes their rival honours boast ;
Discordant all, yet each resembling each.

- 290 High tow'ring on the right a lordly pile,
With burnish'd gold and glitt'ring turrets grac'd,
Illustrious shines : The gay Corinthian mode,
Rich with luxuriant art and wanton pride,
Supports th' aspiring fabric. Rang'd within,
295 A thousand consecrated tapers yield
Wide o'er th' illumin'd isles a solemn blaze,
Each to some guardian Saint devoutly rear'd :
While Rome's grey genius, touch'd with secret joy,
Views her new Gods, unnumber'd as her old,
300 In pagan shrines with pagan rites ador'd.

High on a porph'ry throne, in holy state,
A sov'reign pontiff sits supreme ; his face
Fictitious wrinkles plow ; his palsied head
Totters beneath a triple crown, but fast
305 He grasps the golden keys, that ope the gate

Of Heav'n, sole passport to the papal skies.
 Beneath his throne wide-wasting Tyranny
 Extends her iron hand ; and, breathing fire,
 Her bloody banner Persecution waves ;
 310 There too dull Ignorance, in monkish garb,
 Displays an idiot-grin ; and, side by side,
 Pale Superstition, hung with reliques round,
 Inscribes with many a cross her trembling breast.

Of clumsy Tuscan dress, unhewn and rude,
 315 The adverse structure rose. Discord within,
 Fell portress, opens wide the brazen valves
 That grate with rusty roar. A glimm'ring light
 Shot thro' the dreary dome, and faintly shew'd
 Dim, shadowy forms, that rais'd a hideous cry ;
 320 Loud and discordant as the midnight howl
 Of prowling beasts on Libya's sandy wild,
 When each with savage roar demands his prey.

There

There the four Parents of the motley rout
 In nooks obscure with momentary pangs
 325 Drop their curs'd progeny, and teem each hour
 With some new offspring : Here wild Anarchy
 Tramples on crowns, high waving in her hand
 A martyr'd Sov'reign's head ; Enthusiast Zeal
 Rolls the distorted eye, and heaves her breast,
 330 Impatient of the demon ; griesly Schism
 Far from the crowd retir'd, in lonely cell
 Broods o'er the seeds of mischief yet unborn ;
 Hypocrisy behind, beneath her robe
 A secret ponyard grasps, prepar'd to drop
 335 Her seemly mask, and strike the godly blow.

On these the jarring crew, in all besides
 Dissentient, all on these infix their eyes,
 Thence draw new life, and in firm phalanx join'd,
 Support with stubborn league the good old cause.

340 There in short tunic clad, precisely four,
 A gifted elder, with inverted eyes

D

And

And locks new-circumcis'd, harmonious hymns
 Enraptur'd nonsense, and with holy leer
 Gloats on the faintly dames that grace his flock.

345 Here, all aghast with horror and with hate,
 A wretch, wild-staring, eyes a sacred vase
 Replete with limpid waves: Loudly he raves
 With uncouth roar; like him whose boiling veins,
 Fir'd by some madd'ning hound's invenom'd foam,
 350 Ferment with rage canine; convuls'd he views
 In agonizing pain the watry lake,
 Then grins, and howls, and champs his frothy chain.

Beyond, in meek composure musing sat
 A silent shape demure, with folded arms,
 355 And vest unfullied with superfluous pride:
 But ever and anon a stifled groan
 Burst from his breast, and oft the Sp'rit within
 'Choak'd and compress'd, came struggling for a vent:
 At length the torrent swells; the turbid flood
 360 Pours from his lungs, and thunders thro' the fane.
 Such

Such were the chief; the rest were long to tell,
 A frantic rout, where each his sev'ral note
 Exalting, swells the loud-tongu'd dissonance.
 Behind, from subterranean caverns crept,
 365 In jesuit-weed, and monkish cowls array'd,
 A secret band; but soon, their garb transform'd,
 In sable cloaks and puritan disguise
 'They fire the crowd, and join th' infernal yell.

Stunn'd and affrighted at the wild uproar,
 370 We speed our hasty flight, and quickly reach
 The beauteous dome, whose marble portal, deck'd
 With chaste Ionic ornaments, disclos'd
 A female form, the guardian of the fane.

In velvet robes she sat, of darkest grain,
 375 And o'er her decent shoulders had she thrown
 A stole of purest lawn, expressive sign
 Of inborn sanctity: Upon her breast,
 Beaming with gems, a golden cross there lay;

Her aspect grave, yet chearful, and divine,
380 For blended in her venerable cheek
Sat Age and Immortality. Big tears
Of yearning joy stole down her furrow'd face,
While all around she cast her melting eyes,
And look'd maternal tenderness and love.
385 With winning grace, beneath the sacred throne,
Around her mitred Moderation throws
Attractive smiles, so languishingly sweet,
That each beholder melts, and fiery rage
Softens to veneration : By her side
390 Gay Liberty, Britannia's darling faint,
Her beauteous weight on Monarchy reclines,
Supporting, and supported : Near her stands
Sweet Piety, in snowy mantle clad,
With all her train of moral virtues round;
395 Her looks with heav'n commercing, and her soul
Half mounted on the wing to meet her bliss :
Science beyond, her leaden shackles broke,

Wide

Wide to the world expands a sacred tome,
Which he that runs may read: On either hand
400 She rests, incumbent, on two gentle maids,
Fair Cam, and Isis crown'd with learned tow'rs.

With rev'rence touch'd, yet, mix'd with tender love
And big with expectation, to my guide
I turn'd, and thence new cause of wonder drew.
405 His wither'd face in youthful beauty shone,
Stript of its wrinkly bark; his hoary locks,
Transform'd to radiant gold, in wanton curls
Hung gracefully behind, and darted forth
Ineffable effulgence; waving wings
410 From both his shoulders sprung, and, as he fann'd
The buxom air, all Araby exhal'd
From his rich plumage: Awful thus he spoke,
While accents more than human struck my ear.

" Mortal, in me thy guardian Seraph view,
415 " That stooping from yon' argent spheres have led

" Thy

"Thy steps to pure RELIGION: Taught by her,
 "Pursue the glorious path; to realms of joy,
 "Regions of ecstacy, and love; whose bliss
 "Nor thought can reach, nor angel's tongue reveal."

420 More said he not, but, mounting on the wing,
 High o'er her head self-balanc'd hung, and swell'd
 A trumpet's golden voice; the trembling air
 From pole to pole wafts the shrill harmony,
 And shakes earth's utmost bound: The neighb'ring
 425 From their firm bases nod; then headlong fall [fanes
 In universal wrack with deaf'ning peal
 And ruinous confusion: Loud the din,
 As at the crash of jarring elements,
 When the red flash flames through the cloudy sky,
 430 And heav'n in all its thunder chides mankind.

Firm and unshook amid the dreadful scene
 Our sacred structure stood; it stood, but soon
 Grew larger, and yet larger: All around

Tall

Tall columns upward shoot, broad arches bend,
435 Long vistas open, ampler roofs arise,
And big domes proudly swell; Wide flew the gates,
When torrent-like in numbers numberless
In rush'd, obedient to the clarion's call,
A mighty host, the pride of ev'ry clime,
440 And fill'd the spacious temple's hollow womb;
Thick as the dusky swarms, when heav'n descends
In vernal show'rs, that wedg'd in close array
Crowd the strait entrance of the fervent hive.

Before the shrine with reverential awe
445 Humbly they bow'd; amid the zealous throng
Prostrate I fell, and gently breath'd my prayer.

"Accept, great Parent, source of Truth, accept
"These tributary vows, this slender All,
"The last, the meanest of thy sons can pay!
450 "O may'st thou stand till time itself shall fail;
"Rocklike, tho' papal storms around thee roar,
"Or

"Of hollow faction's undermining guile
"In secret plot thy fall! Long may it thou reign;
"Restor'd to all thy rights, and, greatly just,
455 "Reform, with due severity, mankind;
"Bid, from the dust her head pale Virtue rear,
"From recreant Prelates strip the sullied lawn,
"And teach the Atheist not to scorn his God;
"Then, fill'd with deathless glory, from the world
460 "Triumphant rise, and fix in heav'n thy throne!"

F I N I S.



